

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 219674 TOSEC 260047

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C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 219674 TOSEC 260047

FOR SECRETARY AND SCHAUFELLE

FOLLOWING REPEAT GABORONE 1656 ACTION SECSTATE INFO MASERU
MBABANE PRETORIA 03 SEP 76

QUOTE C O N F I D E N T I A L GABORONE 1656

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, ELTN, EAIR, BC, US, RH
SUBJECT: CALL ON PRESIDENT KHAMA

REF: STATE 215933

1. SUMMARY: IN ACCORDANCE WITH INSTRUCTIONS CONTAINED REFTTEL,
CHARGE' PRESENTED TEXT OF SECRETARY'S PHILADELPHIA SPEECH TO
PRESIDENT KHAMA ON SEPTEMBER 2. IN SUBSEQUENT CONVERSATION,
PRESIDENT SHOWED INTEREST IN U.S. ELECTIONS, TIMING OF SECRETARY'S
POSSIBLE VISIT TO SOUTHERN AFRICA, AND GOB'S POTENTIAL TRANSPORT
PROBLEMS, ESPECILLY ROAD AND RAIL. END SUMMARY.

2. ON RECEIVING TEXT OF SECRETARY'S REMARKS, PRESIDENT KHAMA
EXPRESSED THANKS AND THE HOPE THAT SECRETARY'S TALKS WITH VORSTER
WILL BE SUCCESSFUL. HE ASKED SPECIFICALLY ON WHAT DATES SECRETARY
MIGHT BE PLANNING TO VISIT SOUTHERN AFRICA. CHARGE' REPLIED THAT
SECRETARY'S PLANS TO VISIT AFRICA WERE AS YET UNKNOWN, AND
WOULD HEAVILY DEPEND ON OUTCOME OF HIS TALKS WITH VORSTER.

CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 02 STATE 219674 TOSEC 260047

3. AS THIS WAS ALSO CHARGE'S INITIAL COURTESY CALL, PART OF CONVERSATION WAS DEVOTED TO NON-SUBSTANTIVE SUBJECT. PRIMARY AMONG THESE WAS PRESIDENT'S KEEN INTEREST IN U.S. ELECTORAL PROCESS, INCLUDING NOMINATING CONVENTIONS. HE ASKED A NUMBER OF SEARCHING QUESTIONS, AND CONCLUDED THAT THE U.S. ELECTIONS WERE TERRIBLY COSTLY IN DOLLARS AND IN TERMS OF THE EMOTIONAL AND PHYSICAL DEMANDS ON BOTH CANDIDATES AND WOULD-BE CANDIDATES.

4. PRESIDENT ASKED IF THERE WERE ANY NEWS CONCERNING THE BOT-ZAM ROAD PROJECT (I.E., GOB'S REQUEST TO HARD-SURFACE THE NATA-KAZUNGULA PORTION). CHARGE' OF COURSE COULD SAY ONLY THAT QUESTION WAS RECEIVING MOST SERIOUS STUDY IN WASHINGTON. PRESIDENT THEN MOVED TO SUBJECT OF RAILROAD, COMMENTING THAT HE BELIEVED THE RHODESIANS WOULD NO LONGER PUT ANY MONEY INTO THE BOTSWANA LINE, BUT THAT THE ESCALATING WAR WOULD FORCE THEM TO CLOSE IT IN ORDER TO BEEF UP SECURITY ON THE BEITBRIDGE LINE. HE DID NOT ELABORATE FURTHER, ASSUMING (CORRECTLY) THAT CHARGE' HAD BEEN BRIEFED EXTENSIVELY ON RAIL TRANSPORT PROBLEM IN RELATION TO RHODESIA. IN CONTEXT OF GENERAL CONVERSATION ON TRANSPORTATION MATTERS, PRESIDENT DID COMMENT THAT PRESENT GABORONE AIRPORT IS BOTH DANGEROUS AND INADQUATE. IT IS TOO CLOSE TO POPULATED AREAS AND MUST EVENTUALLY BE MOVED. AT THE SAME TIME, GOB WILL NOT THROW GOOD MONEY AFTER BAD BY INVESTING IN IMPROVEMENTS TO AN AIRPORT THAT ULTIMATELY WILL HAVE TO BE MOVED. HE SAID SITE FOR NEW AIRPORT HAD ALREADY BEEN SELECTED, BUT GOB HAS NOT THE "MILLIONS" NECESSARY TO BUILT IT.

5. COMMENT: A. HAS USG EVER BEEN APPROACHED BY BOG CONCERNING CONSTRUCTION OF A NEW AIRPORT? IF WE HAVE NOT ALREADY DONE SO, IT MIGHT BE AN INTERESTING AND WORTHWHILE PROJECT FOR US TO CONSIDER (WITHOUT AROUSING UNFOUNDED EXPECTATIONS ON PART OF GOB, OF COURSE). B. URGENTLY REQUEST THAT DEPARTMENT ALLOW EMBASSY TO INFORM PRESIDENT KHAMA OF SECRETARY'S AFRICAN TRAVEL PLANS AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. PRESIDENT'S SENSITIVITIES AND DESIRE TO BE IN ON THE ACTION ARE APPARENT, DESPITE HIS CAREFULLY CULTIVATED APLOMB. AS PRESIDENT ON ONE OF FOUR "CONFRONTATION STATES", HE WOULD CERTAINLY APPRECIATE EARLIEST POSSIBLE INFORMATION ON SOUTHERN AFRICAN NEGOTIATIONS. END COMMENT. ALBERTI

UNQUOTE ROBINSON
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PAGE 03 STATE 219674 TOSEC 260047

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